

Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist Thursday, 24 June 2021



In England & Wales:

Cycle of Prayer: Those who suffer persecution and denial of human rights

Keynote: We are invited to be intimate friends of God – to be family

Prophet Isaiah 49: 1-6

'The Lord called me before I was born, from my mother's womb he pronounced my name', so the Old Testament prophet has a sense of his vocation and one that links naturally with the birthday celebration of John the Baptist. Like John, Isaiah can say, *'(God) made my mouth a sharp sword, hid me in the shadow of his hand, he made me into a sharpened arrow... and all the while my cause was with the Lord... he who formed me in the womb to be his servant... to gather Israel to him.'* Isaiah, as indeed is John the Baptist, are both destined to be known the world over, for the Lord has spoken, *'I will make you the light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.'*

Responsorial Psalm 138 (137) – A song of joy at being alive in God's presence

Acts of the Apostles 13: 22-26

Paul recalling the promise made by God to king David shows it to have been fulfilled, *'To keep his promise, God raised up for Israel one of David's descendants, Jesus, as Saviour, whose coming was heralded by John when he proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the whole people.'* Then the apostle Paul, another spokesman for God, challenges us, *'My brothers, sons of Abraham's race, and all you who fear God, this message of salvation is meant for you.'*

Gospel according to Luke 1: 57-66, 80

'The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had shown her so great a kindness, they shared her joy.' Much as any community might gather round and rejoice at the birth of a child, so we can join today in celebrating the birth of Elizabeth's son – John.

'Now on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child... the father asked for a writing tablet and wrote: "His name is John." And they were astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. "What will this child turn out to be?" They wondered. And indeed the hand of God was with him.' We may well reflect on the destiny of this man John and his words calling the people to repentance, and for us to prepare a way for the Lord.